

AIR FORCE FELLOWS

AIR UNIVERSITY

TRUST AND PARTNERING WITH THE JOINT TEAM

by

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Abstract

The 19th Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF) listed five priorities in the 2008 Air Force Strategic Plan, the second of which is to "Partner with the Joint and Coalition team to win today's fight." To identify priority areas to improve supporting the Joint team, the CSAF Executive Action Group surveyed all Combatant Commanders, their Air Component Commanders, and several senior Air Force mentors. The surveys did not include members of Coalition teams leading to this study being focused solely on Joint Partnering. The comments from the survey concluded that trust may be the most fundamental issue requiring attention between the Air Force and the rest of the Joint team. To fully understand the issue, this study discusses the factors that have been shown to contribute to the development of trust, how the Air Force can best increase trust and use it as a mechanism to increase combat effectiveness with the rest of the Joint team. Because trust is difficult if not impossible to quantify, understanding its components allows a more comprehensive analysis. The "Cycle of Trust" concept introduced in this paper emphasizes the need to address all individual components of the problem before trust can be realized. Finally, the authors apply trust theories to the specific task of increasing trust within the Joint team. The recommendations provided are informed by a year of dedicated study and many years of experience on the part of the interviewees.

Chapter 1

Introduction

President Obama stated that the resurgence of al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan is the greatest threat to U.S. security and the military's top overseas priority.¹ The important task of winning the wars in the Middle East coupled with the Department of Defense's (DoD) ongoing fiscal challenges make it more important than ever for each of the Services to work together to maximize combat effectiveness as a Joint team. The United States Air Force (USAF) vision statement spells out the Air Force's intent to achieve this goal:

To be a trusted and reliable joint partner with our sister services known for integrity in all of our activities, including supporting the joint mission first and foremost. We will provide compelling air, space, and cyber capabilities for use by the combatant commanders. We will excel as stewards of all Air Force resources in service to the American people, while providing precise and reliable Global Vigilance, Reach and Power for the Nation.²

The importance of partnering with the Joint team was further highlighted by General Norton Schwartz when he was appointed as the 19th Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF) and outlined his top five priorities:³

- Reinvigorate the Nuclear Enterprise
- **Partner with Joint and Coalition team to win today's fight**
- Develop and care for airmen and their families
- Modernize our aging air and space inventories
- Acquisition excellence

A successful partnership with the Joint team involves many different elements such as interoperability of weapons systems, operations support and organization to support the Joint fight to name just a few. In his first speech as CSAF, General Schwartz said, “This business is all about trust” and “Without trust, we are nothing.”⁴ Trust builds and sustains relationships—it is an indispensable part of all meaningful relationships. However, leaders sometimes overlook the influence of trust because there is no obvious means of measuring it or its bottom-line impact.⁵ But the fact that trust is difficult to measure does not diminish its importance. In a profession where people must routinely put their lives in someone else’s hands, trust is foundational.

While the CSAF’s second priority also includes partnering with the Coalition team, this paper will focus specifically on trust among the Air Force and the rest of Joint team. There was significantly more data on relationships between the U.S. Services that spanned a longer time period.

Two key assumptions were made during this study. First, there is insufficient trust between the Air Force and the rest of the Joint team, at least in certain areas. Much of the data underlying this assumption came from a December 2008 CSAF’s Joint Partnership Survey of all the Combatant Commanders (CCDRs), their Air Components, Air Force Major Commands (MAJCOMs), and Numbered Air Forces (NAFs), conducted by the Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF) & CSAF Executive Action Group (HAF/CX).⁶ The survey assessed how Joint and Air Force leaders view the Air Force’s performance in 13 Core Functions, which are discussed in the next chapter.

The second assumption made in this paper is that all the Services are interested in increasing Joint combat capability and will work to that end. Many airmen were skeptical about the validity

of this assumption. Some interviewees suggested land forces would not be so amenable and are simply exploiting their time in the limelight as some perceive the Air Force did in the 1990s during the Persian Gulf and Kosovo wars, where airpower played a larger role than ever before. While the DoD offers an interesting environment in which to study Machiavellian power politics, the authors contend that even zealots within each of the Services would eventually admit they depend on each other to win. Airmen realize boots on the ground are necessary, especially in counter-insurgency fights such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan. The other services are no less aware that air, space and cyber superiority are prerequisites for nearly any type of operation they are tasked to conduct. The Services are interdependent and as long as that is true, increasing trust is clearly in everyone's best interest.

Given those assumptions, this paper investigates several areas identified in the survey that suggest insufficient trust exists between the Air Force and its sister Services. Trust is deconstructed, first into two parts, cognitive and affective trust, before discussing five factors that influence both types of trust. Since trust is difficult to measure, it is critical to understand the influencing factors so effort can be applied strategically to areas that will produce the desired effect. Finally, the last section of the paper offers recommendations, which if applied in a way that attacks the entire problem, can help strengthen trust between the Air Force and the rest of the Joint team.

Notes

¹ The White House website, http://www.whitehouse.gov/agenda/foreign_policy/ (accessed 24 February 2009).

² Air Force Link <http://www.af.mil/main/welcome.asp> (accessed 5 March 2009).

Notes

³ “The CSAF’s Perspective,” General Norton Schwartz’s briefing to the Senior Leader Officer Course, Bolling AFB, 1 August 2008

⁴ SSgt Julie Weckerlein, Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs, General Schwartz in as 19th chief of staff, Air Force Link, Washington D.C., 12 August 2008. <http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123110516>.

⁵ Stephen R. Covey, The High Cost of Low Trust, Blog Archive <http://www.stephencovey.com/blog/?p=13> (accessed 26 February 2009).

⁶ Specific data from the Combatant Commander Surveys may be requested from the SECAF/CSAF Executive Action Group (HAF/CX).

Chapter 2

Identifying Areas for Improvement in Joint Partnering

Combatant Commander Survey

The HAF/CX Joint Partnership survey was sent to ten CCDRs, their Air Component commanders, and all MAJCOM and NAF commanders, as well as six retired lieutenant general senior mentors. Twenty-seven of 33 surveys were returned, with 8 of 10 CCDRs responding. The remaining 19 surveys were completed by Air Force MAJCOM or NAF Commanders and retired senior mentors.

The survey consisted of 55 questions in 13 categories based on the Air Force Core Functions and associated Service Capabilities as defined by the 2008 Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review.

The 13 survey categories were as follows:

1. In my theater, the USAF provides adequate Agile Combat Support
2. In my theater, the USAF provides adequate Air Superiority
3. In my theater, the USAF provides adequate capability to Build Partnerships
4. In my theater, the USAF provides adequate capability Command and Control
5. In my theater, the USAF provides adequate Cyberspace Superiority
6. In my theater, the USAF provides adequate Global Integrated ISR
7. In my theater, the USAF provides adequate Global Precision Attack
8. In my theater, the USAF provides adequate Nuclear Deterrence Operations
9. In my theater, the USAF provides adequate Personnel Recovery Operations
10. In my theater, the USAF provides adequate Rapid Global Mobility
11. In my theater, the USAF provides adequate Space Superiority
12. In my theater, the USAF provides adequate Special Operations capability
13. Does the USAF organize, train and equip appropriately to present forces to your command?

Respondents, all 3- and 4-star generals, were also provided an area at the end of each category to write-in additional comments. These comments were the most revealing part of the survey because many of them pointed to an insufficient level of trust between the Services. For example, six respondents criticized the Agile Combat Support mission area for not adapting deployment policy and training to the current fight. Three respondents explained that even when co-located on the same base, the services tend to segregate themselves and invest in redundant facilities and functions. Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) was also heavily criticized. One-third of the respondents (11) commented their ISR needs were not being met and several implied they thought the reasons for it had nothing to do with high operations tempo in Iraq and Afghanistan. The respondents used many examples to illustrate points and later in this paper some of those examples are analyzed.¹

Notes

¹ The replies to this survey were provided with the understanding that they were for the SecAF and CSAF to use in evaluating the performance of the Air Force. Making the data non-attributable would be nearly impossible and releasing these surveys in their entirety or even partially would be detrimental to future efforts to obtain candid feedback from these leaders.

Chapter 3

Trust Deconstructed

The military context, in many ways, is the ultimate forum for issues of trust because it encompasses the highest forms of risk, vulnerability and uncertainty. Risks are high because the consequences of failure are great – usually involving life and death. The services depend on each other to mitigate these huge risks. The risks involved make trust absolutely essential. Without trust, interdependence will not work.¹

Research suggests there are at least two broad aspects of trust, *cognitive* and *affective*. Cognitive trust is developed logically through verification or monitoring mechanisms. Affective trust is emotional and results from experience and intimate knowledge of interests and intentions. People consider these two types of trust independently.² To illustrate the point, imagine buying a used car. The objective is to get a high-quality car at the lowest cost. Checking under the hood and taking a test drive can verify that the car is in good condition. This verification mechanism serves to build cognitive trust. However, the salesman's objective is to make as much money as possible on the sale. Since the buyer's and seller's interests are opposed, building affective trust is difficult. This is a situation where cognitive trust is high but affective trust is low. The buyer could overcome the concern of overpaying by verifying the car's value with an uninterested third party. Finding the asking price to be reasonable further increases cognitive trust and may be enough for a business deal. However, many people might be uncomfortable putting their lives in

the hands of this used car salesman. The opposite situation can also exist. Some salesmen have the unique ability to build affective trust. But even this rare ability will not get them far if they are selling a poor quality product. A person who falls victim to a smooth sales pitch will often feel betrayed and the salesman will lose both cognitive and affective trust. In the military context, these examples are meant to show that both cognitive and affective trust are required for effective Joint warfighting. People prefer to trust their lives to someone they trust completely.

Researchers Devon Johnson and Kent Grayson, have further broken down trust into elements that can affect cognitive or affective trust, or even both at the same time. These elements are:

- Perceptions of expertise
- Perceptions of performance
- Reputation
- Satisfaction with previous interactions
- Similarity

Cognitive trust depends mainly on perceptions of *expertise* and *performance*. Affective trust depends mainly on *similarity*. *Reputation* and *satisfaction with previous interactions* affect both types of trust.³

Perceptions of expertise

In August 2008, the Office of Air Force Lessons Learned (HQ USAF/A9L) studied the integration of airpower in Joint operational-level planning. The study was in response to a perception that airpower was not contributing as much as it could in Iraq and Afghanistan. The A9L team found deficiencies in education and training to be primary factors. Many individuals serving in the Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) and Air Component Coordination Elements (ACCE) staffs were not qualified for their positions.⁴ Since these operational level organizations are where the interface between the air, land and maritime components takes place,

unqualified individuals can easily give the perception within the Joint team that the Air Force lacks expertise. Even worse, unqualified individuals working at this level can have a theater-wide impact creating disproportionately large effects on perceptions.

Operational planning in Iraq and Afghanistan is complicated further by the fact that it is often conducted on very short notice by small teams at the tactical level. Since airmen are not embedded in ground units down to the company or platoon level, they often are not present during planning for operations where airpower may be required. This fact has led to airpower considerations being a last minute ‘add-on’ to operations leading to inefficient and ineffective use of airpower.⁵ The doctrinally established interface for airpower planning and integration with Army units is the Air Support Operations Center (ASOC). However, one senior leader noted in the Joint Partnership survey that ASOC personnel do not have expertise in airlift or ISR and those are important needs of the units on the ground.

The 2006 Air Force Doctrine Document 2-1.3 specifically states that the ASOC must have expertise in several areas including ISR, and efforts are in place to put airlift and ISR planning expertise where it can help optimize the use of airpower. For example, the Air Force has assigned ISR Liaison Officers down to the brigade-level but several people serving in the ACCE and CAOC believe that addressing airpower integration into the Joint fight will take much more. When surveyed on how to fix the situation, the most frequent response was, “Create a culture in the USAF truly valuing operational level experience.”⁶ A perception exists within the Air Force that officers with operational level experience get passed over, while those who get promoted to fill senior Air Force operational level positions have followed a career track emphasizing Air Force unit command and having limited operational level experience.⁷

Operational-level assignments seem to fall below many other higher priorities. Professional Military Education (PME) in-residence is important to an officer's chances for promotion. Squadron, group and wing commands are also important for officers who aspire to higher grades. A Joint assignment is required for officers before they can be considered for flag rank. These "requirements" leave little time to fit an operational-level assignment into a future senior leader's career. This approach to force development tends to be myopic because it focuses on the ways, not the ends and this inevitably leads to disconnects.

First, focusing on unit command tends to build an officer's expertise in one domain – air, space or cyber. Joint assignments often require an airman who understands the entire Air Force and all the domains in which it operates. The operational-level is the best place to get this multi-domain warfighting expertise. Therefore, any long-term force development strategy should include operational-level assignments as an important part of future leader development.

Second, PME students, those in Joint billets and many commanders will not deploy during their assignments. This has led to a situation where an in-garrison position often looks better to a promotion board than a deployed, warfighting, operational-level assignment. The system is unintentionally keeping its best people out of the fight. That in turn may be creating airmen who are ill-prepared to be Joint Task Force or Combatant Commanders and fill key joint staff positions.⁸

Expertise is an important part of trust and creating expertise takes a long-term strategic force development plan with concrete objectives and active management.

Perceptions of performance

Expertise and performance go hand-in-hand. Expertise is 'knowing what to do.' Performance is the application of expertise to a job. One area where the Air Force has the most

expertise of any government agency is Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) but the Air Force lost a Government Accountability Office (GAO)-backed bid to be the Executive Agent (EA) for medium-altitude UAS.⁹ Since the Air Force has the expertise to perform this role, it's possible that a perception of poor performance is the cause of the decision.

Demand for UASs in Iraq and Afghanistan has been extremely high and the Air Force has had trouble meeting it. Even though the Air Force has procured more UASs than the DoD official requirement allows, the Air Force draws fire for not ramping up the capability fast enough.¹⁰ This high demand has forced an emphasis on prioritization and created anecdotal accounts of a UAS being “pulled” from a ground unit commander. Although the priorities are set by the Joint Force Commander, not the Air Component, the Air Force takes the blame for “not being there.” These experiences have left some commanders with a poor opinion of the Air Force’s performance.

To obtain as much utility as possible from every available UAS, the Air Force developed a concept of operations which keeps the maximum number of UASs deployed at all times. It also minimizes the deployed footprint and maximizes flexibility.¹¹

The Army UAS concept of operations is much different. It assigns UAS to individual commanders who can use them at their discretion. This approach has a disadvantage in that it requires approximately three times as many UASs and three times as many personnel to do the same job the Air Force concept accomplishes.¹² The Army concept has a critical advantage in that it doesn’t require trust between Services because there is no interdependence.

The Air Force believes it has a better operational concept which saves taxpayer money and uses assets more efficiently, but without the perception of ability to perform the mission effectively, insufficient trust will not allow the solution to work.

Reputation

One respondent to the Joint Partnership survey commented the Air Force has overstepped boundaries with respect to Cyber. The Air Force attempt to create a Cyber Command was reported in many places as an attempted “land grab” to justify increased funding and manpower.¹³ There are people who believe the Air Force has a reputation for conducting land grabs. Carl Builder, a well-known RAND Corporation analyst, wrote that the Air Force was originally forced to advocate for the Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile, which the Army and Navy also wished to own, simply because the ICBM was a threat to the need for manned bombers.¹⁴ Sinister motives are often assumed whenever there is money or power to be gained yet the Air Force has been successful in the past at advocating for new mission areas. This may be another indicator the level of trust has declined between the Air Force and the rest of the Joint team.

Satisfaction with previous interactions

One of the most heavily critiqued areas in the CCDRs’ survey comments was ISR. Responses indicated frustration with a general lack of responsiveness, perceived to be due to the increasingly centralized management of ISR. Commanders whose areas of responsibility are not the Middle East have in many cases lost the ability to task their intelligence sections because they are being utilized for wartime operations in Central Command (CENTCOM). One respondent wrote that during two major war-planning exercises their intelligence section did not take part because they were tasked to support real-world operations. Most officers would agree combat operations may have to take priority over an exercise occasionally, but good intelligence is a critical component of a commander’s readiness. Diverting most of the available ISR to one

CCDR may be necessary but depriving nine of the ten CCDRs creates nine times more dissatisfaction than satisfaction.

Similarity

Similarity connotes the presence of common values and interests.¹⁵ Assumed in similarity is another factor: *Contact*. Contact is an important factor in a military context because common values and interests are very likely to exist between people in any Service. To illustrate the importance of contact in a military context, consider airmen such as Joint Terminal Area Controllers (JTACs) who spend large parts of their careers embedded in Army units. These airmen sometimes feel more part of the Army than the Air Force.¹⁶ This perspective also indicates although there are small differences in values and interests between Services or subgroups within the Services, there is enough common ground to enable almost any two Service members to trust each other as long as there is sufficient contact. However, far too often, there is insufficient contact between Service members to achieve the level of trust necessary to maximize combat effectiveness. One illustration is the difference in the way Air Force leadership train to deploy vs. how Army leadership train to deploy. One Air Force two-star general discovered a stark contrast during his 10-day trip to the Middle East. Army units begin training with their assigned teams 15 months prior to actual deployment. In addition, they visit the deployed location with team members several times during the course of the 15-month training period. By the time they are in the war zone, the team has trained together and is familiar with the mission and situation. On the other hand, Air Force leaders are identified for a deployment, attend a short combat training course, and have little to no contact with the team he or she will be leading until arriving in theater. “Air Force people are seen as ‘plug-ins’ with a rapid turnover rate.”¹⁷ Based on this limited contact, it is no surprise that trust is also limited.

Common values and interests can be thought of as part of culture. In his article, “Does Military Culture Matter?” Dr. Williamson Murray, states military culture is the most important factor in military effectiveness on the battlefield and in the processes of innovation during times of peace. He defines military culture as comprising of the “ethos and professional attributes, derived from both experience and intellectual study, that contribute to military organizations’ core, common understanding of the nature of war.”¹⁸ The ethos and professional attributes Dr. Murray refers to are often called the “warrior ethos” within the Services. Military cultures have a common understanding of the nature of war as involving shared risk. The Army and Marines focus on the common infantry training that all their personnel must complete as a way of bonding their force together and building their cultures’ warrior ethos. The Navy’s warrior ethos revolves around the shared risk of being on a ship at sea. Everyone must do their part to keep the enemy from sinking the ship and potentially killing everyone on board. The Air Force has difficulty breeding these bonds because it sends a relatively small percentage of its force into harm’s way. Airmen simply do not feel the sense of shared risk the other Services do as a group.¹⁹ In fact, many do not believe they are warriors. Half of the airmen (51 percent of 454 respondents) who responded to an Air Force Public Affairs Internal Communication Assessment Group (ICAG) survey #7, *Identification as Airman, Wingman, Warrior*, said to be a warrior, one must be at risk of injury or death. On the same survey, nearly half of the airmen who responded did not believe an administrative airman is as much a warrior as a security forces airman.²⁰ Since not all airmen go into harm’s way as part of their normal jobs, instilling a common warrior ethos is a difficult undertaking. Former Air Force Chief of Staff, General T. Michael Moseley, attempted to change this when he launched a transformational initiative to reinvigorate the warrior ethos in airmen. Perhaps the greatest success from that initiative so far has been the

Airman's Creed, which is a unifying statement of beliefs centered on warrior ethos that is now formally taught at all initial Air Force training. Other initiatives meant to emphasize the Air Force's distinctiveness have been less well received. The "Above All" recruiting campaign, discussed in Chapter 4, is one example that did more harm than good. Another issue worth considering is the Airman Battle Uniform. Sixty percent of airmen surveyed believe all Services should adopt similar utility uniforms as they did with the Battle Dress Uniform.²¹

It is important to realize every service brings a unique perspective to the fight, and there is great value in this approach. The challenge is that Joint warfighting requires interdependence, interdependence requires trust, and trust requires at least a certain amount of similarity.

The Cycle of Trust

This chapter focused on the factors that influence trust, which is now illustrated in a concept called The Cycle of Trust (Figure 1). The five factors are arranged into a sequence around the outside of the ring with Reputation beginning and ending the cycle. Some ways in which the factors can be influenced are shown inside the ring. This illustration is greatly simplified but is helpful for conceptualizing the issue and visualizing solutions that deal with the entire problem.

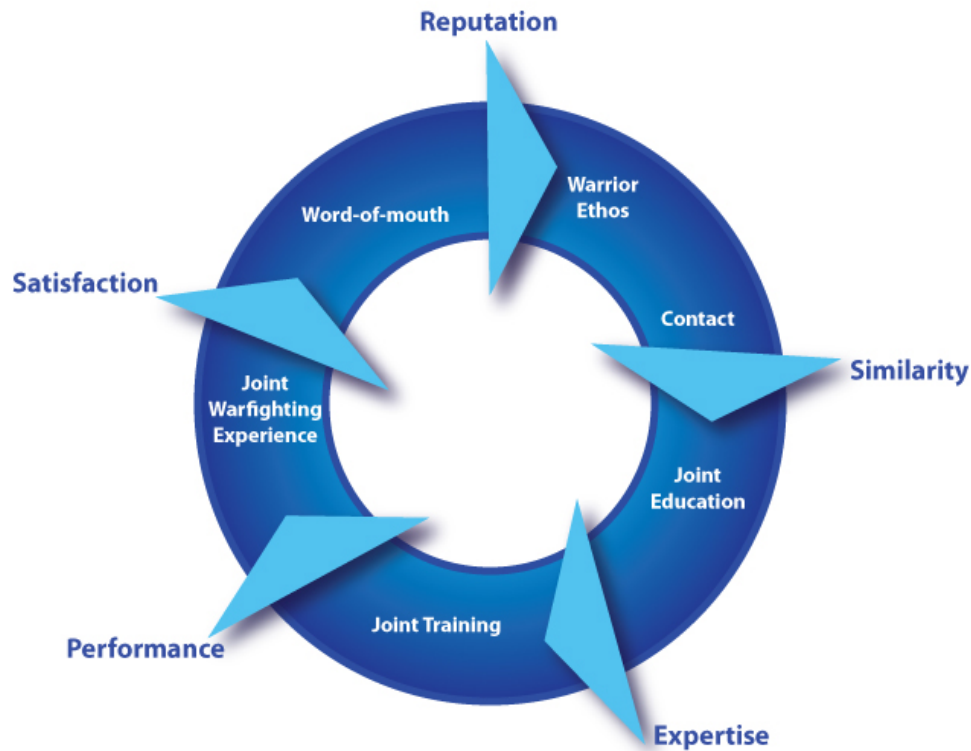


Figure 1 The Cycle of Trust

Early in a military career a soldier, sailor or Marine may know very little about the Air Force. What others in their Service have taught them or said about the Air Force will be the initial impression of the organization and its people. Second, Similarity (common values and interests) is required to allow the trust cycle to continue. Third, airmen must give members of the other Services positive impressions of their expertise and performance. One way this can be accomplished is through Joint education and training. When the Services go to war together as a Joint Force, the experience should leave the other Services satisfied with their Air Force interactions. The cycle ends with Reputation as service members who have experienced positive interaction with the Air Force and airmen pass on their perceptions to others within their Service,

thus beginning a new cycle of trust, hopefully with a more positive and credible reputation for the Air Force.

The cycle illustrates that all factors that influence trust must be positive for trust to develop. The ways that the factors could be influenced are shown in a way that is greatly simplified. Joint training, for example could influence several of the factors that influence trust even though in Figure 1, it appears to only influence performance. This simplification does not diminish the usefulness of the depiction because there is no harm in positively affecting more than one factor. The danger is neglecting a factor which will inhibit the formation of trust. The next chapter will discuss how the ways shown in Figure 1 can improve trust within the Joint team.

Notes

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² Carol Tutzauer, and Raymond Hsieh, *Distinguishing between Trust and Distrust in Organizational Contexts*, "Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, New Orleans Sheraton, New Orleans, LA, 27 May 2004, 9. http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p113055_index.html.

³ Devon Johnson and Kent Grayson, *Cognitive and Affective Trust in Service Relationships*, Journal of Business Research, 58, 2005, 502. <http://www.kentgrayson.com/Grayson%20Archive/cogaffjbr.pdf>

⁴ Office of Air Force Lessons Learned (HQ USAF/A9L), "Integration of Airpower in Operational Level Planning Report" (Dated August 2008), U.S. Air Force Lessons Learned Website (accessed 6 February 2009), https://www.jllis.mil/USAF/document_repository/Reports/L2%20Report%20IAOLP%20Final-CDR-482.pdf, 6.

⁵ Ibid., 6.

⁶ Ibid., 37.

⁷ Gwendolyn DeFilippi, Chief, Airman Development Division, Directorate of Personnel, U.S., Air Force, interview by author on Airmen Culture and Force Development, 12 January 2009

⁸ Ibid., 38-39.

⁹ United States Government Accountability Office, Report to the Subcommittee on Air and Land Forces, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, *UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS: Additional Actions Needed to Improve Management and Integration of DOD Efforts to Support Warfighter Needs*, GAO-09-175, November 2008, 12.

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¹⁰ Lt Gen David A. Deptula, *Bullet Background Paper on Air Force Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS)*, 3 Feb 2009.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Maj Travis A. Burdine, *The Army's "Organic" Unmanned Aircraft Systems: An Unhealthy Choice for the Joint Operational Environment*, Draft submitted to Air and Space Power Journal but not yet published, 19.

¹³ Noah Schachtman, *Air Force Suspends Controversial Cyber Command*, Danger Room, 13 Aug 2008, <http://blog.wired.com/defense/2008/08/air-force-suspe.html>.

¹⁴ Carl H. Builder, *The Icarus Syndrome: The Role of Air Power Theory in the Evolution and Fate of the U.S. Air Force* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 166.

¹⁵ Devon Johnson and Kent Grayson, *Cognitive and Affective Trust in Service Relationships*, 503.

¹⁶ Maj Gen Lawrence Stutzriem, interview by the author, 11 February 2009.

¹⁷ Maj Gen Lawrence Stutzriem, discussion with author on his observations from his Iraq/Afghanistan trip (2-11 April 2009) , 17 April 2009.

¹⁸ Williamson Murray, *Military Culture Matters*, Volume 7, Number 2, January 1999, Foreign Policy Research Institute, <http://www.fpri.org/fpriwire/0702.199901.murray.militaryculturedoesmatter.html>, (accessed 12 March 2009)

¹⁹ Interview with Dr. Lani Kass, Special Assistant to the Air Force Chief of Staff, October 2008.

²⁰ Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs, *Communication Research Bulletin #75-Warrior Ethos*, 22 Dec 08.

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Chapter 4

Building Trust

Building trust is a complex issue. As a result, many organizations plunge into a common pitfall when considering ways to improve trust—or tackle any complex organizational change for that matter. This pitfall, called “satisficing,” occurs when people consider complex problems and is the tendency to latch onto the first solution that seems satisfactory and sufficient to them. Issues such as trust are especially susceptible to satisficing because they are difficult to measure and discussion on causes and solutions quickly becomes a matter of opinion with precious few indisputable facts to get in the way. In the Air Force, as in other services, differences of opinion are usually settled quickly because the highest ranking advocate’s opinion wins. But this process often does not provide a long-term solution. Since Air Force leaders generally stay in their positions for two to four years, controversial actions taken by one leader are often overturned by the next, before they have had a chance to become part of the organizational culture. Just one example is the recent Air Force decision to remove all deployment data on officer selection briefs because it emphasizes overseas deployments over performance of jobs that contribute just as much to the Nation’s defense but do not allow the opportunity to deploy (i.e. space, missile and some UAS crews).¹ Just two years ago, the deployment history was added to the officer selection brief to reinforce the Service’s expeditionary nature.² The removal of the deployment data on officer selection briefs may help focus promotion boards on job performance and allow greater fairness to “deployed-in-place” airmen, but it also sends a message to airmen that there is

no incentive to deploy and furthermore, sends a message to the Joint team that we do not value the part of the Air Force that is most similar to them.

Many of the problems that impact trust between the Air Force and the rest of the Joint team require cultural changes. The difficulty of changing culture within a complex organization should not be underestimated. It is a difficult task, but it has been and can be successfully accomplished over a sufficient period of time.³ Historical examples of changing military culture indicate the minimum time-horizon that should be considered before expecting to see culture change start to take hold is around 10 to 15 years.⁴ In the Air Force context that means for culture change to take hold, the next three to four Chiefs of Staff must agree a specific action taken is the right solution to the problem and they must continue the effort in the same basic direction. Beyond that, most commanders at lower levels must believe in the solution and sell it to their troops if the change is to be lasting.⁵ One key to selling a solution is demonstrating its effectiveness.⁶ Partial solutions are risky in attempts to build trust because if the entire issue is not addressed, a partial solution will give an impression of ineffectiveness. The Cycle of Trust provides a conceptual framework that ensures the whole problem is considered with a focus on long-term solutions. This paper will now discuss some broad recommendations using the various stages of the Cycle of Trust, which can be applied to increase trust with the rest of the Joint team.

Reputation

Word-of-mouth

Word-of-mouth can be an extremely powerful driver in forming people's opinions. The massive growth of the internet search engine, Google, was powered almost exclusively by people telling each other how easy to use and effective it was.⁷ A military member who has had no

interaction with another Service relies on people they trust to tell them what they need to know. Word-of-mouth can spread positive as well as negative perceptions but if the general perception of others is negative, it can take generations for the perception to turn generally positive if word-of-mouth alone is relied on. This can be accelerated if other areas of the Trust Cycle are aggressively targeted to change existing perceptions.

The media also has the potential to impact reputation because of its ability to reach a wide audience with strong, influential messages. Using the media to impact reputation can be difficult as not all messages are received by the audience as intended. This was the case with the Air Force's "Above All" recruiting campaign. Its goal was to recruit by showcasing the Air Force's presence over battlefields and the critical nature of the service's missions in air, space, and cyberspace.⁸ However, it was scrutinized by a variety of audiences to include lawmakers who questioned whether the ads were an illegal attempt to lobby Congress.⁹ Even airmen were concerned the ads conveyed a message that the Air Force "thought it was better than everybody else, even other services."¹⁰

The French Air Force (FAF) has an interesting program to help bolster the word-of-mouth and media strategy to help influence public opinion and perceptions. The FAF provides education on airpower to public figures such as reporters and grants them an honorary rank in the Air Force (up to colonel). These honorary officers are provided useful information and have access to Air Force contacts who can verify facts or answer questions. The program increases the accuracy of information presented to the public without creating the perception of "spin."¹¹

Similarity

Warrior Ethos

Working toward a common Warrior ethos with the rest of the Joint team is one of the most difficult tasks the Air Force faces. Joint training has the potential to assist in moving the Joint team towards a more common warrior ethos. To use an Air Force example, one organization in the Air Force where the warrior ethos is stronger than most is the 8th Fighter Wing at Kunsan Air Base, Korea. Realistic training for wartime duties is constant at Kunsan. Base attack simulations create a sense of shared risk much like that created on a Navy ship. In between exercises, airmen are trained on their wartime duties with special attention given to areas identified as needing improvement from the previous exercise. There is a tendency in many parts of the Air Force to believe that training is conducted at the beginning of an airman's career in an Air Education and Training Command (AETC) classroom and then perhaps every now and then in an exercise or on a deployment.¹² Preparing for war every day should have a positive effect on a person's perception of oneself as a warrior. This may not be practical in every case. For instance, airmen who work at the Military Personnel Flight or the Finance office may only be able to perform a basic wartime duty during exercises. At Kunsan Air Base, personnel from the base legal office were trained to debrief pilots returning from missions and write mission reports. This allowed them to use the writing skills they needed for their "day job" and have a greater connection to the wing's wartime mission.¹³ When wartime skills are trained often enough, it has another desirable effect. Airmen will start to find ways to improve performance of their wartime duties and a cycle of continuous improvement will begin.

If this type of model could be followed in a Joint context, the same positive results can be achieved.

Contact

Joint interaction early in careers would allow Service members to form their own opinions about the other Services.¹⁴ As long as this interaction develops positive perceptions, it could immunize them against inaccurate or outdated opinions passed by word-of-mouth. Also, since similarity of values and interests is a pre-condition of trust, early contact confirming similarity allows trust to begin earlier. One way this contact could be facilitated is through Joint education and training.

Expertise

Joint Education

Joint education is an important way contact has been increased in the past. Exchange cadets at the Service academies and exchange students in Developmental Education programs have long allowed the Services to demonstrate their expertise. Joint schools such as National Defense University have created even more Joint education opportunities and the services send their best to these schools, which helps to give positive perceptions of expertise. Expanding these programs allows deliberate interaction between Joint Service members and has the potential to improve trust.¹⁵

It's important to remember that increasing interaction will only have a positive influence if there is a positive perception of expertise gained from the interaction. Identification of training and education deficiencies shown by the ACCE staffs were discussed in Chapter 3, but similar issues were also identified 12 years earlier in 1996, when the attendees at CORONA, a regular meeting of Air Force four-star generals, said that "officers have not been able to articulate the role of airpower in the realm of Joint operations."¹⁶ If officers are not able to articulate the role

of airpower, their ability to articulate the roles of space and cyberspace power are likely even worse. Again, trust is not gained without positive perceptions of expertise.

Air Force officers are unlikely to have a career which allows them firsthand expertise in air, space and cyberspace. The first time they will be exposed to all three domains is generally at the operational level of war. Since interaction between the services also happens mainly at the operational level, assignments at operational-level organizations such as Air Operations Centers (AOC) may be the most important and may be underemphasized in force development.

There are reasons to emphasize this development earlier in an officer's career as well. Recent studies have found officers who deal with operational or strategic-level issues must use cognitive functions that are different from those used at the tactical level, and these cognitive functions are simply not present in everyone.¹⁷ Even if those functions are present in youth, if not used as a person ages, they degrade. This means senior officers who spend most of their careers at the tactical level may simply be too old to learn operational art if they haven't had any education, training or experience in it.¹⁸

There are good examples of programs designed to teach operational art and strategy. The United Kingdom (U.K.) ensures officers possess the level of cognitive skill required for solving problems at the operational and strategic levels using their Higher Command and Staff Course (HCSC). In general, HCSC serves as a gateway to rank above colonel in the British armed forces but the course is also required by civil servants of a similar rank.¹⁹ The U.S. military takes a slightly different approach with its Advanced Studies Groups which include the Air Force's School of Advanced Air and Space Studies (SAASS), the Army's School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS), the Marine Corps' School of Advanced Warfighting (SAW) and the Navy's Maritime Advanced Warfighting School (MAWS). Although these programs are operated

by the individual Services, officers from other Services are part of each course.²⁰ The U.S. programs are taken earlier, typically when officers are O-4s (Major or Lt Cdr). These programs have been very successful and completion is highly regarded as an indicator of future potential but they are not necessarily used as a vetting program for higher grades. The U.S. approach focuses less on developing or identifying future senior leaders and more on educating greater numbers of people who often go on to serve in operational-level planning jobs after graduation. The fact that the Air Force Office of Lessons Learned still identifies training and education shortfalls at the operational level indicates a need for even more people to be able to competently perform these duties. Expanding an existing program is often the easiest answer to an increased need, but a year-long course may be both too expensive and more than is actually required. Producing large numbers of people who can perform well-defined duties may be better accomplished with training.

Performance

Joint Training

The Air Force has made drastic improvement to its training programs this past year by lengthening the Basic Military Training Course by two weeks to incorporate the Basic Expeditionary Airman Skills Training (BEAST) exercise; modifying its two-week, behind-enemy-lines Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE) program to include a four-day course called Evasion Conduct After Capture; incorporation of a 10-hr block of “combatives” ground combat training at Maxwell AFB, Ala., for officers; and standing up the Air Force Expeditionary Center at Fort Dix, New Jersey. The increased focus on training airmen is important for developing warrior ethos and building expertise, but training in a Joint

environment has the greatest potential impact on inter-service trust because it affects all of the factors that influence trust.

Creating Joint training opportunities is extremely difficult for several reasons. Making a realistic wartime environment where a large Joint force can train takes Herculean efforts and is very expensive both in materiel and personnel costs. Although improvement in Joint training has been and will be difficult, it may offer the largest returns on efforts because Joint training has the ability to influence all the factors that influence trust.

Exercises such as GREEN FLAG provide Joint training in a realistic environment; however, the focus is on teaching the basics of tactical employment of airpower and landpower to relatively inexperienced personnel. This is important but as discussed earlier, the operational level is where much of the interface between the components happens. Frequent Joint training at the operational level of war could have positive impacts even beyond providing an environment where trust can be built with the other services. One of those positive impacts would be to allow airmen at the operational level to experiment with how the air component fights in air, space and cyberspace. A safe-space for experimentation is important for innovation.²¹

A challenge for making this type of training a reality is the expense. Realistic exercises at the operational level could require tactical level forces to participate and this makes the proposal extremely complicated and expensive. Simulating the tactical level forces could bring the costs of such training under control and allow operational level training to be done more often. This sort of simulation has proven useful for experimentation and wargaming but because realistic simulations are difficult to build, their use in training has been limited.

Satisfaction

Joint Warfighting Experience

While the focus of this paper has been mainly on people issues such as improving relationships and building trust, it is also important to address the Air Force's ability to provide capabilities to the Joint team. As in the used car salesman analogy used in the beginning of the paper, a good salesman selling shoddy merchandise will not keep either cognitive or affective trust for long. Capabilities were the focus of the CCDR Joint Partnership survey and the lowest-scoring categories included Command and Control (C2), ISR, Operational-Level Planning, and Cyber. These areas are similar in many respects—they are inherently Joint (or even government-wide). Perhaps with the exception of Cyber, which is doctrinally a new area, these areas are all somewhere behind the “pointy end of the spear” which makes developing warrior ethos an issue. Careers in these areas are not considered stereotypical “war fighting” jobs. However, in the words of Carl Builder, a well known author and analyst for the RAND corporation, “While many soldiers express concern about the balance between teeth and tail in their armies, the teeth are now more than sharp enough; it is the tail that marks the difference between world-class armies and local militias.”²² Clearly these areas are critical to the Nation's success in war and are the areas where the greatest gains could be made in improving Air Force and Joint warfighting capability according to the CCDR Joint Partnership survey.

The Royal Air Force (RAF) found surprisingly similar issues when they conducted a study of potential future warfighting environments. In developing a strategy that prepared the RAF for an uncertain future, their Air Staff looked at scenarios that focused on homeland defense (Introspective), independent power projection (Outward), and Coalition warfare (Polarized). Figure 2 depicts the approximate weight of effort required for each of the three

scenarios in four different areas. The relative expenditures for 2008 are also shown in blue on the graph and it is evident that far more effort is put on combat air and mobility than C4I (Command, Control, Communication, Computers and Information) and ISTAR (Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance - roughly equivalent to ISR). The heavy black outline shows the area common to all the future scenarios and gives a baseline requirement for weight of effort for each of the areas on the graph. The RAF also found that even more important than budgeting the correct amount of money, innovative people must be retained to drive maximum performance in each of these areas.²³ Keeping the most innovative people could be seen as a hedge against uncertainty because people who can adapt quickly will be able to make the best use of the equipment at hand.

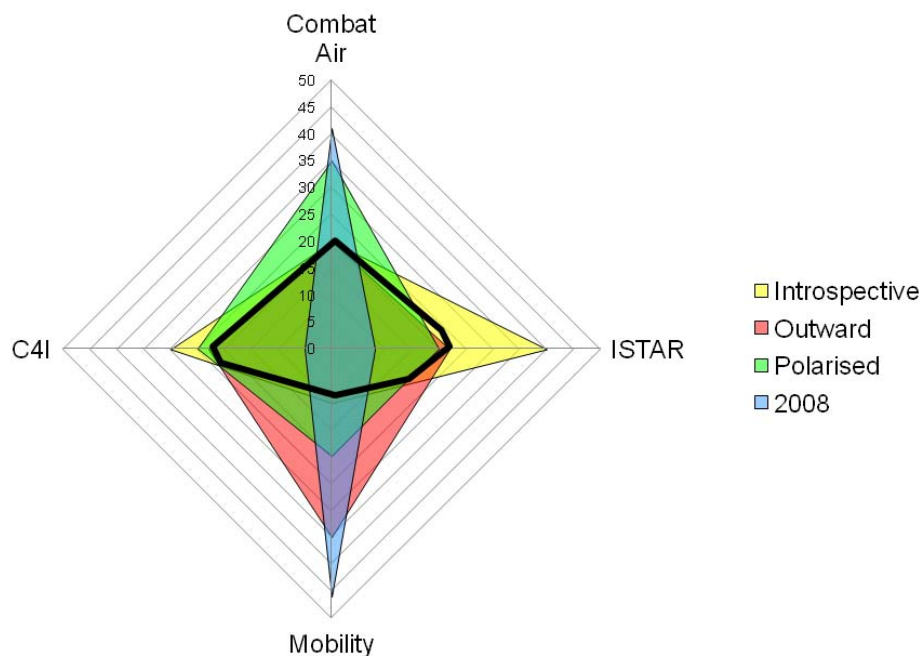


Figure 2 RAF Strategy Study

During the lengthy, public and politicized debate of how many F-22s the Air Force requires, a member of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, an influential Washington think tank said, “The Air Force is seen as a ‘life support system’ for the F-22.”²⁴ Clearly this statement can be disputed but the popular perception is that the U.S. Air Force is out of balance just as the RAF now believes it is. The Air Force may need to build capability in some areas and sacrifice capability in others to maximize Joint warfighting efforts.

Notes

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¹³ Interview with Capt Jennifer Saraceno, conducted by author, 14 April 2009.

¹⁴ Dr. David R. Mets, Air Force Research Institute, to the authors, e-mail, 19 March 2009.

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¹⁹ Ibid., 51.

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²³ Air Commodore Mark Roberts, Director UK Air Staff, RAF 2030 Strategy Briefing, Washington D.C., November 2008.

²⁴ Chief of Staff of the Air Force Strategic Studies Group outreach initiative meeting with members of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington D.C., 3 March 2009.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

As Robert Wilkie, a former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs states in his recent editorial, the Air Force is at a military crossroads facing a political and spiritual challenge.¹ The political challenges primarily result from the unfavorable media coverage, which has shaken the confidence of current civilian political leadership. Spiritually, Wilkie states the constant blows by the press have knocked the Air Force off its message and have led many to question their contribution to the current fight and the efficacy of airpower as a decisive factor on the battlefield. Underlying both these challenges is the important factor of trust that the Air Force must regain from its stakeholders—most importantly the rest of the Joint team.

As evidenced in the CCDR Joint Partnership survey results, the Air Force is performing well in terms of the capabilities it provides the warfighting commands. Fighting jointly is a tough business leveraging unique capabilities, specialties, and individual competencies to the warfighting advantage of all. The Air Force provides distinct warfighting capabilities in the air as do the other services on land and at sea—each service brings separate core capabilities to the Joint table. Such efforts are especially important in today’s resource constrained environment.

However, great technology alone is not what determines a Service’s ability to be successful. As General Schwartz has said after taking his position as Air Force Chief of Staff, “This business is all about trust” and “Without trust, we are nothing.” Trust is based on insight

and familiarity, knowing who will do the right thing in the proper way. Currently, there is an insufficient level of trust between the Air Force and the rest of the Joint team.

The Cycle of Trust, introduced in this paper, provides a conceptual framework that ensures the entire issue has been considered and comprehensive solutions are developed. The Air Force can improve trust with the rest of the Joint team using the Cycle of Trust, which begins and ends with an organization's **Reputation** and can be driven by people's opinions spread via *Word-of-Mouth*. The second step in the cycle is **Similarity**, where working towards a common *Warrior Ethos* and ensuring airmen have *Contact* with sister service members is critical to allowing the cycle to continue. The third step is **Expertise**, where contact between airmen and the Joint team could be facilitated by joint education opportunities. In applying their expertise, airmen create positive perceptions of their **Performance**, possibly through Joint training. Joint training is difficult to execute, but the Air Force must pursue this avenue because it promises the largest returns. The fifth focus area is **Satisfaction**, where *Joint Warfighting* concentrates on providing Joint capabilities to the warfighter. The Cycle of Trust is a continuous sequence that was designed to emphasize that the problem must be understood and dealt with as a whole over the long-term. Some broad recommendations were discussed in this paper, but the possibilities are only limited by the imagination. The authors believe the framework will be useful in helping future leaders discover even more creative ways to increase trust between the Air Force and the rest of Joint team. The other services need the Air Force now more than ever.

Notes

¹ Robert Wilkie, *The Air Force at a crossroads: Irregular warfare does not erode air power's importance*, Armed Forces Journal, April 2009, <http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/2009/04/3959979> (accessed 14 April 2009).

Glossary

ACC	Air Combat Command
ACCE	Air Component Coordination Elements
AETC	Air Education and Training Command
ASOC	Air Support Operations Center
BEAST	Basic Expeditionary Airman Skills Training
C2	Command and Control
C4I	Command, Control, Communication, Computers and Intelligence
CAOC	Combined Air Operations Center
CAS	Close Air Support
CCDR	Combatant Commander
CENTCOM	Central Command
CSAF	Chief of Staff of the Air Force
EA	Executive Agency
GAO	Government Accountability Office
HAF/CX	Secretary of the Air Force & Chief of Staff of the Air Force Executive Action Group
HCSC	Higher Command and Staff Course (United Kingdom)
HQ USAF/A9L	Headquarters U.S. Air Force Lessons Learned
ICAG	Internal Communication Assessment Group (Air Force Public Affairs)
ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance
ISTAR	Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance
JTAC	Joint Terminal Area Controller
MAJCOM	Major Command
NAF	Numbered Air Force
NOPC	Naval Operations Planning Course
PME	Professional Military Education
RAF	Royal Air Force
SAASS	School of Advanced Air and Space Studies (Air Force)
SAMS	School of Advanced Military Studies (Army)
SAW	School of Advanced Warfighting (Marine Corps)
SECAF	Secretary of the Air Force
SERE	Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape
UAS	Unmanned Aerial Systems
UK	United Kingdom
USAF	United States Air Force